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The Magazine for Slot & Video Poker Players

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'This is JEOPARDY!'

IGT's video version of "Jeopardy!" taps the full potential of the game show's theme • By Frank Legato

Alex Trebec should have been there. He would have been pleased.

Trebec, host of the popular *Jeopardy!* TV game show, was unable to make it to Harrah's Atlantic City last month for the official launch of the video version of IGT's "Jeopardy!" slot machine.

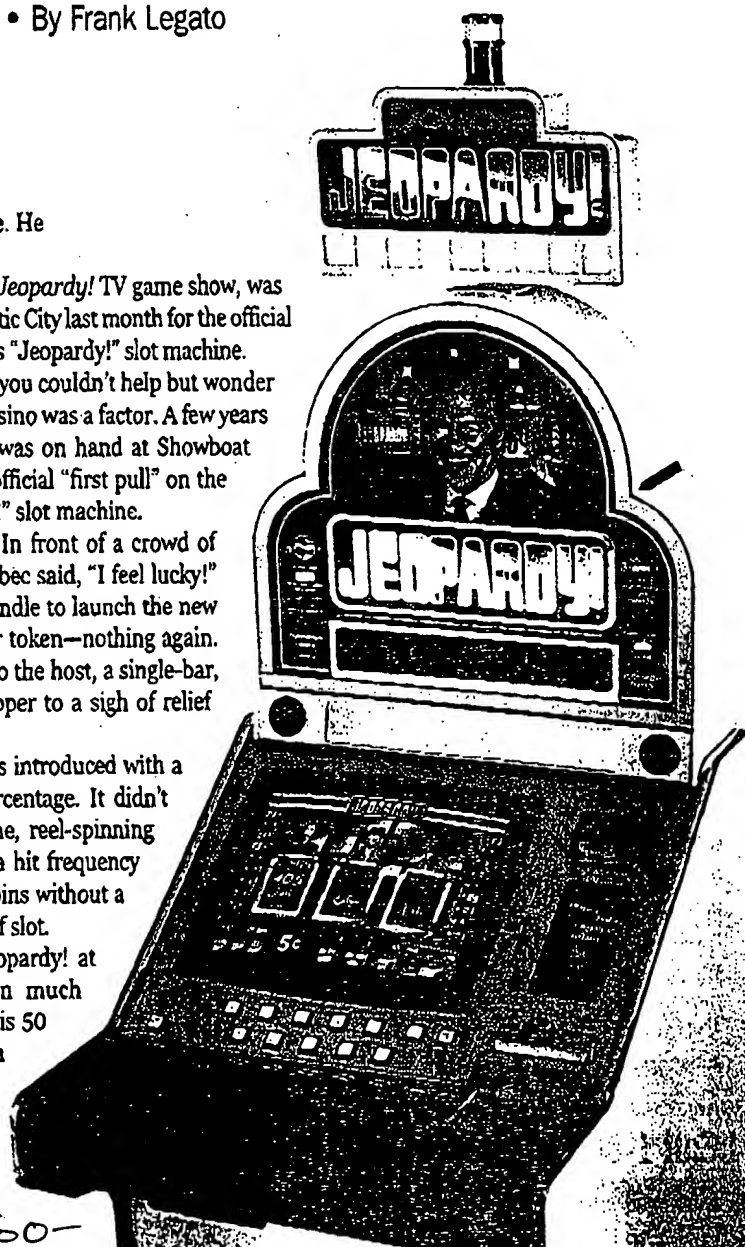
While it was probably a scheduling conflict, you couldn't help but wonder if Trebec's last appearance in an Atlantic City casino was a factor. A few years ago, the affable host of the brainy quiz show was on hand at Showboat (now a Harrah's-owned property) to take the official "first pull" on the handle of the original, reel-spinning "Jeopardy!" slot machine.

It ended up being around 20 "first pulls." In front of a crowd of reporters, photographers and TV cameras, Trebec said, "I feel lucky!" as he inserted a dollar token and pulled the handle to launch the new slot with a jackpot. Nothing. He put in another token—nothing again. After what must have seemed like an eternity to the host, a single-bar, two-coin hit sent tokens clanging into the hopper to a sigh of relief from Showboat officials.

The fact that the Jeopardy! reel spinner was introduced with a dry spell had nothing to do with payback percentage. It didn't mean the slot was miserly—it was a single-line, reel-spinning game hooked to a multisite progressive, with a hit frequency somewhere around 12 percent. Eight to nine spins without a winning combination is the norm on this type of slot.

Had he been on hand to launch video Jeopardy! at Harrah's, the press event would have been much different. The hit frequency on the new game is 50 percent; in all likelihood, he would have hit a payoff the first or second spin.

But much more than the hit frequency of IGT's new "i-Game Plus" version of Jeopardy! would impress Mr. Trebec. The original reel-



spinner used the *Jeopardy!* theme music, an announcer saying "This is Jeopardy!" at the beginning of the bonus round, and a grid of bonus amounts in the top box that looked something like the game board on the show. The game itself was indistinguishable from any other progressive reel-spinner on the floor.

For the video version of the game, IGT tapped all the potential of the i-Game Plus format to design a slot game that effectively re-creates the feel of the TV game show. The bonus rounds in this game simulate segments of the actual show, in a clever and entertaining format.

Video *Jeopardy!* simulates as much of the show as is possible working within the laws of randomness—players cannot be required to answer actual quiz questions. But if you are a junkie of *Jeopardy!*, the TV show, you will love the multiline video version of "Jeopardy!," the slot machine.

Long Time Coming

The video version of *Jeopardy!*, a nine-line nickel game, actually was announced more than a year ago. It was, however, one of many games for which IGT's engineers were maximizing the potential of

IGT tapped all the potential of the i-Game Plus format to design a slot game that effectively re-creates the feel of the TV game show.

the i-Game Plus format. "The game has been finished for a while, but because we have such a backlog of new video slot games, it has been waiting on the shelf for its place in the sun," says Jean Brossard, IGT's director of product development.

Its place has definitely arrived. The mission in this game was to make the slot more true to the actual game show, and that mission has been accomplished. "Because of the i-Game Plus format,

we had a lot of flexibility," says Brossard. "We had a speech recording session with Alex Trebec, and we have his figure animated on the screen to guide you through the game events."

The little animated Alex (his closeup also fills the top box) is only the beginning, though. IGT has incorporated elements of the *Jeopardy!* television show into sound and animation in both the primary game and in three separate bonus events. These bonus events parallel the three segments of the game show: "Jeopardy!," "Double Jeopardy!" and "Final Jeopardy!"

Two of the bonus events involve a second-screen replica of the question board used on the television show. Scattered *Jeopardy!* symbols on the first three video reels trigger the main "Jeopardy!"

OCCUPATION: Professional Slot Player

Some people's tax forms are more interesting reading than others . . .



GUARANTEED!

Not many people report their occupation as a "professional slot player," but now this is no longer a pipedream. When Charles Lund got his PhD. in Statistics, he never dreamed he'd wind up analyzing (and beating!) the slot

machines of Las Vegas!

Charles Lund's 1999 best-seller, *Robbing the One-Armed Bandits*, blew the lid off the casinos' best-kept secret: smart players can beat many of the popular "banking" machines. His new 2000 edition analyzes 39 new machines, including: Fireworks, Jungle King, Merlin, Monopoly, Super Double Diamond Mine and many more.

Because he has been recognized as a professional slot player, Charles Lund has been barred from the slot departments at a number of major Las Vegas casinos. He now uses techniques to appear like a loser when he is actually winning. He explains how you can use these same techniques to beat the machines and remain welcome.

All of this is revealed in this book. If you are serious about winning money from slot machines, this is the book you need. No get-rich-quick B.S. Just the facts.

"I've been writing about the potential edge for slot players in this column for years, but Charles W. Lund has raised it to an art form." — John Grochowski, *Chicago Sun-Times*

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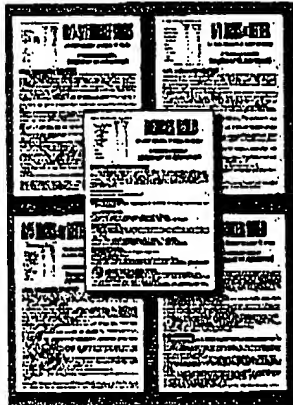
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bonus (to the familiar declaration by announcer Johnny Gilbert, "This is Jeopardy!"). The reels fade to reveal an introduction screen, where the animated Alex welcomes the player, and directs him to the bonus board: "Here are our Jeopardy! categories for today."

The screen displays the bonus board as categories appear across the top, just as on the show, with Trebec announcing each one. There are over 100 categories programmed into the software, each with catchy names similar to those on the real show.

Each square on the board bears the familiar "Jeopardy!" logo, but instead of questions, they hide bonus coin values. The player is prompted to begin picking squares using the touch-screen feature, and the bonus accumulates until one of two "Final Jeopardy" squares is revealed. Hidden among the squares on the bonus board is one "Double Jeopardy!" square. If the player finds it, all bonus amounts to that point are doubled.

When the "Final Jeopardy!" square is revealed, the screen fades again and a contestant appears with five squares. The player is prompted to pick one of them—four hide additional bonus coins; one hides a 2X multiplier. The player's accumulated bonus from the regular Jeopardy! round is either added to or multiplied and awarded to the player.

According to Brossard, the average bonus payment from this feature, which occurs approximately every 95 spins, is 100 times the line bet, with a maximum possible bonus of 770 times the line bet.

Scattered Jeopardy! symbols on the last three reels trigger the "Double Jeopardy!" bonus round. The round progresses in the same manner as the regular Jeopardy! bonus, except that hidden among the board are two "Daily Double" squares. If the player reveals one, the bonus accumulated to that point is doubled. If he finds both, all bonus amounts to that point, including the portion that was already doubled, are quadrupled—and the player still has the chance to double that total with the 2X multiplier in the Final Jeopardy! round.

The average bonus payout with this feature (it happens every 300 spins) is 198 times the line bet, with a maximum of 2,416 times the line bet.

Contestant symbols (there are nine contestants included as reel symbols in the primary game) on the middle three reels trigger a third bonus round, the "Contestant Bonus." The screen depicts the TV Jeopardy!

Jeopardy!

IGT

Slot Type: Nine-line, multicoin video slot; three separate secondary bonus events; multi-site progressive jackpot; nickel denomination

Payback % range: 90%

Average Hit Frequency: Every 2 spins (50%) with all pay lines active

Top Jackpot Progressive: resets at \$100,000

Availability: NJ, NV, LA
(other jurisdictions pending)

set with three contestants in place behind the podium. The player picks a contestant, who writes a bonus value, just as contestants write their answers to "Final Jeopardy!" on the TV show. (The familiar music plays in the background.) The spot in front of the chosen contestant reveals a multiplier amount up to 50X (it looks handwritten), after which the other two spots open up to reveal the bonus amounts the player did not choose. The number of the chosen contestant is multiplied by the total bet for the award.

IGT's software engineers had a little fun designing this bonus screen: The contestants are actually animated versions of several IGT executives, including company President Tom Baker, Executive Vice President Bob Bittman, Engineering and Design VP Joe Kaminkow, and Jean Brossard.

The Contestant Bonus occurs every 222 spins. One of the three bonus events occurs every 55 spins, which is more frequent than the bonus in the original reel-spinning version of the game.

In addition to all these events is the chance at the big-money progressive. Five Jeopardy! symbols on pay line no. 9 wins the jackpot, which resets at \$100,000 and is paid in one lump sum.

Harrah's Atlantic City is launching video Jeopardy! with an initial contingent of 56 games—one of the largest commitments the operator has ever made to a single game.

The operator's faith in the game is well-justified. It is possibly the most feature-rich, frequently hitting slot ever to be placed on a multisite progressive jackpot network. And millions of Jeopardy! fans who have only played the reel-spinner will go bonkers for this new game.

And of course, Alex will be pleased as well. ●